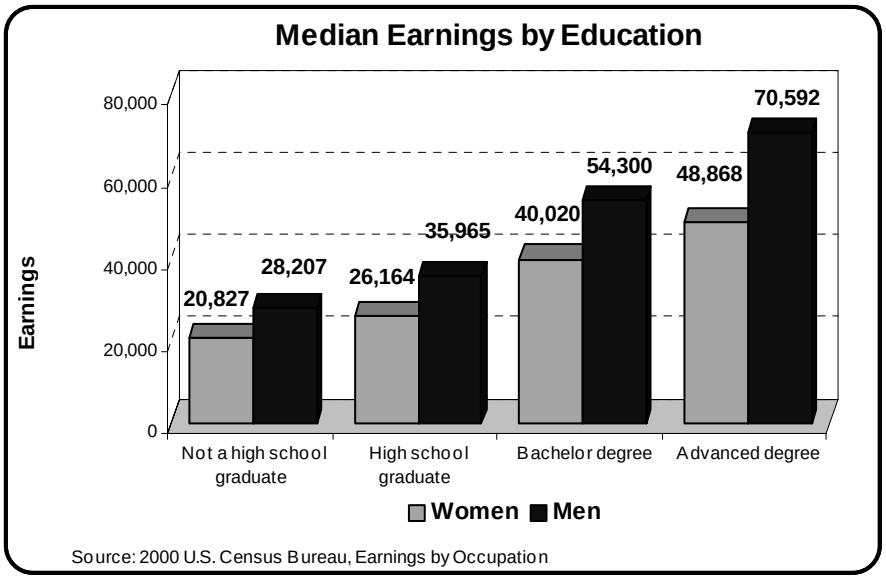
I. Educating Women and Girls

Close to one million children benefit from public education each year in Massachusetts. Although in some institutions of higher education women represent a significant majority of students, that is not why this report identifies education as a critical issue for women. Education is examined not because it is a benefit provided primarily to girls, but rather because of the importance of education in the lives of women and girls. The overwhelming majority of girls in the Commonwealth receive – through public education – the skills they need to succeed in the modern economy, the knowledge that enables them to participate effectively in our democratic society, and the talents and abilities that help them to build satisfying and fulfilling lives. For most women, education is the most important way in which their lives are affected by state government.

Budget cuts to all levels of public education compromise the economic security of women who must attain higher levels of education to advance their earnings. Comparing the earnings of men and women by education level shows two stark trends: men have higher earnings at each level of educational attainment; and earnings rise substantially for men and women as they receive additional education. From the perspective of being able to provide economic security for their families, the data suggests that women may need the benefits of education even more than men. While the median earnings of men who have not graduated from high school total $28,207, women without a high school degree earn only $20,827. Only with a high school degree do women have earnings that approach those of men without a high school degree.[1] The same trend continues at each step of further education as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21



K-12 Education

In 1993, Massachusetts instituted comprehensive statewide changes for public school districts. The Education Reform Act of 1993 demanded accountability for student learning; set statewide standards for students, schools, and districts; and required greater and more equitable funding to schools. Pursuant to this law, Massachusetts adopted several major reforms: statewide curriculum frameworks for core academic subjects; an assessment tool to measure students' academic achievement and schools' and districts' performance; professional development and stronger certification requirements for teachers; and a new foundation budget designed to provide adequate per-pupil-expenditures across all school districts. The state requires specific local contributions from each municipality and provides enough state aid (called "Chapter 70 Aid") to ensure that every district can spend at the foundation budget level.[2] In addition to Chapter 70 Aid, the state has also provided funding for K-12 education through the Department of Education's grants and reimbursements programs for specific purposes, such as reducing class sizes.

Education reform has brought about measurable benefits for public school students. There has been considerable progress on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), for example. Increasing proportions of students have scored at the "Advanced" or "Proficient" levels on this assessment.[3] Students' performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) – the nation's standard test of student achievement – has also shown noticeable improvement, with higher percentages of "Advanced" or "Proficient" than the national averages.[4] There is also evidence that the majority of public school graduates in Massachusetts are likely to continue their education at a post-secondary institution. Although comprehensive data on college enrollment for public high school graduates are not available, a report by the Massachusetts Department of Education shows that more than three-fourths of high school graduates (77 percent) from the class of 2003 intended to continue their education at a two- or four-year college, up from 69 percent in 1993.[5]

Although more work needs to be done to provide adequate funding for school districts and achieve higher performance levels on the MCAS within certain communities – two issues that are in many ways interrelated – overall achievement results show that throughout the 1990s public schools improved their capacity to prepare students for post-secondary education and lifelong learning.

Impact on Women and Girls

Overall, reductions in funding for K-12 education have affected both girls and women. Girls have been affected as they represent half of the school age population. Additionally, as a higher percentage of females than males intend to pursue post-secondary studies after graduating (81 percent versus 69 percent), budget cuts to public school districts can have negative longer-term consequences on women and their families, since higher levels of educational attainment lead to higher earnings.[6] Women, as well, have been affected by funding cuts as they are overrepresented among teachers – 69 percent of all elementary and middle school teachers are women.[7]

Funding

Funding for public K-12 education in the Commonwealth is primarily financed through state and local revenue, as the federal government only contributes 5.4 percent of the total amount.[8] In Massachusetts, state funding for K-12 education is comprised of Chapter 70 Aid and the Department of Education's grants and reimbursements programs. Chapter 70 Aid is the largest state allocation to local municipalities for public education and ensures that every district is able to spend a specified minimum necessary amount known as the foundation budget. In addition to Chapter 70 Aid, the Department of Education awards grants for specific purposes to various districts. Together, these two primary sources of funding represent state support for public schools.

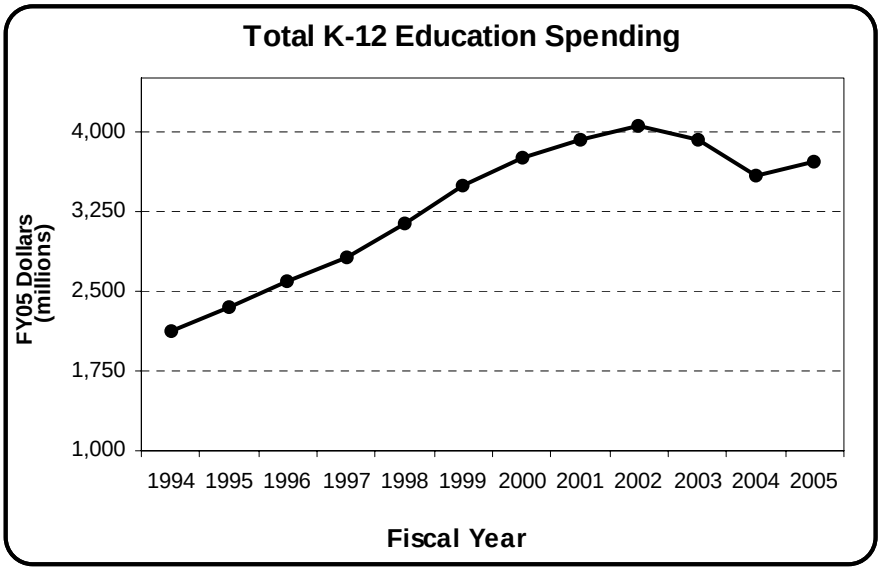
Before examining the impact of the fiscal crisis on K-12 education, it is useful to first review general patterns in overall funding arising from the Education Reform Act's mandate for increased spending on public schools.

- Between fiscal years 1994 to 2002, overall state funding for K-12 education rose from $1.7 billion to $3.8 billion. This represents a six percent inflation-adjusted average annual growth rate.

- After peaking in fiscal year 2002, overall appropriations fell to $3.5 billion in fiscal year 2004, a decline of $473.0 million or twelve percent in real terms. In fact, between fiscal years 2002 and 2004, Massachusetts led the nation in real cuts to per pupil state funding for public education.[9]

- Appropriations for fiscal year 2005 total $3.7 billion. This amounts to a $141.6 million increase over the previous year in real terms, but is still below the overall inflation-adjusted funding level for fiscal year 2003.

Figure 22



Between fiscal years 2002 and 2003, funding for Chapter 70 Aid rose nominally by 1.5 percent, which is slightly less than the 2.2 percent inflation rate over these years (see Figure 23). Between fiscal years 2003 and 2004, funding fell by $230.5 million or seven percent in real terms. The fiscal year 2005 budget essentially level funds Chapter 70 Aid at $3.183 billion. If funding had kept pace with inflation since fiscal year 2002, $3.433 billion would have been appropriated in fiscal year 2005, which is $250.0 million more than the actual allocation.

Between fiscal years 2001 and 2004, appropriations for the Department of Education's grants and reimbursements programs decreased in real terms by $260.0 million or 39 percent (see Figure 24). Although the current budget increases funding in many areas, most programs are level-funded. In fact, budget cuts in fiscal year 2004 reduced funding such that certain programs were scaled back considerably or eliminated. The fiscal year 2005 budget did not restore most of these cuts.

Figure 23

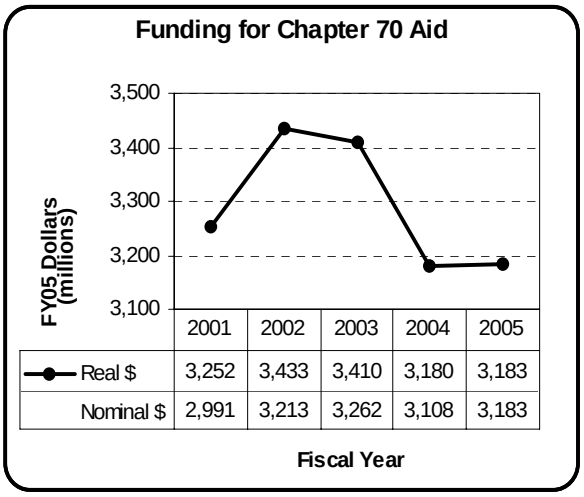
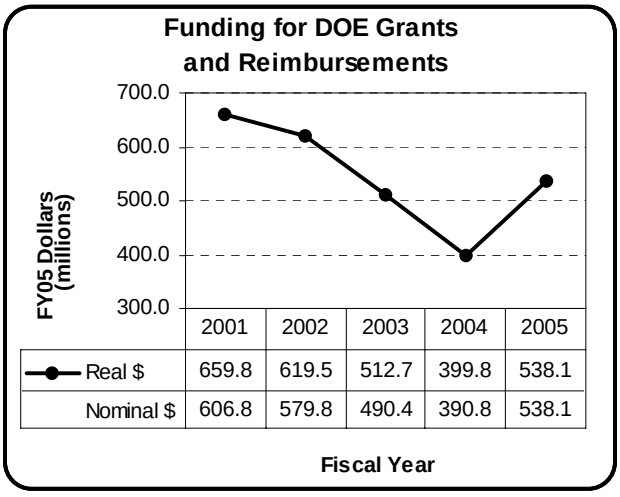


Figure 24



Impact of Funding Cuts

Reductions in state funding for education have forced local school districts either to reduce the resources available in their schools, or to increase local property taxes, or both. Between 2002 and 2003 the number of teachers and other people employed by schools in Massachusetts fell by 3 percent, from 159,933 to 155,913.[10] These reductions increased the overall pupil to teacher ratio and harmed the capacity of schools to meet the needs of their students, girls and boys alike. More specifically, the state cut funding for a number of services that had improved the educational experience for thousands students, including the following: targeted literacy efforts; funding to reduce class sizes; after schools programs; and adult education classes for older students seeking their high school equivalency. In addition to the negative effects on students, thousands of women who teach in our schools have seen their jobs become more difficult as reduced staffing levels add to the challenges of educating our students effectively.

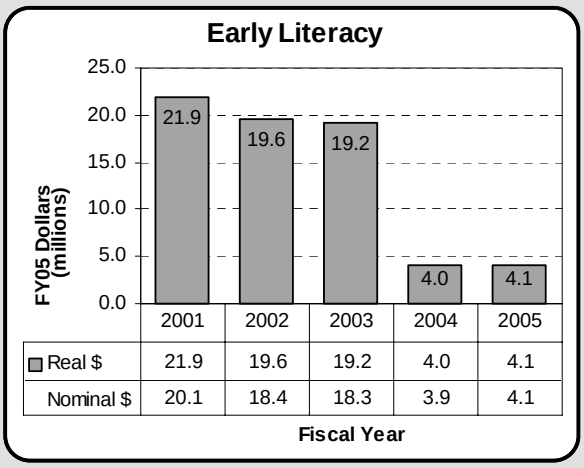
Budget cuts also have long-term consequences, as potential reductions in quality may hinder girls' opportunities to further their education and increase their earnings. The following two pages highlight budget cuts to four grants and reimbursements programs.

Early Literacy – The budget appropriation for early literacy supports programs that improve the reading ability of children in grades K-3 as well as trainings designed to keep teachers current on the latest research findings and literacy teaching techniques. Funding for these services was reduced from $20.1 million in fiscal year 2001 to $18.3 million in fiscal year 2003. Significant cuts in fiscal year 2004 further reduced funding to $3.9 million dollars, nearly 80 percent less than the previous year. The fiscal year 2005 budget appropriation of $4.1 million provides a slight increase over the fiscal year 2004 budget, but is well below the fiscal year 2003 total. Reductions in funding for early literacy initiatives jeopardize the state's commitment to help students become effective readers by the end of the third grade.

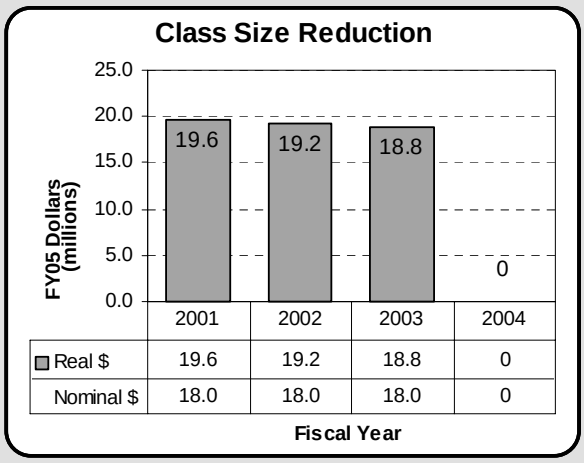
Class Size Reduction – This program, prior to its elimination in fiscal year 2004, provided funding to districts in which at least 22 percent of the student population came from low-income families. Between fiscal years 2001 and 2003, funding for this program to reduce class sizes in the early grades totaled $18.0 million per year. Despite research which directly links student achievement with efforts to reduce class sizes in the lower grades, the state eliminated funding for this program in fiscal year 2004.

After School Programs – When Massachusetts reduced funding for after school programs, it removed support for programs that provide positive benefits to girls. There is evidence that after school programs specifically geared towards middle school girls can improve body image, assertiveness, self-esteem, and competence.[11] In fiscal year 2002, $3.1 million were appropriated for this purpose, down considerably from $11.7 million in the previous year. Despite evidence supporting successful interventions, funding for after school programs through the Department of Education was eliminated in fiscal year 2003.[12]

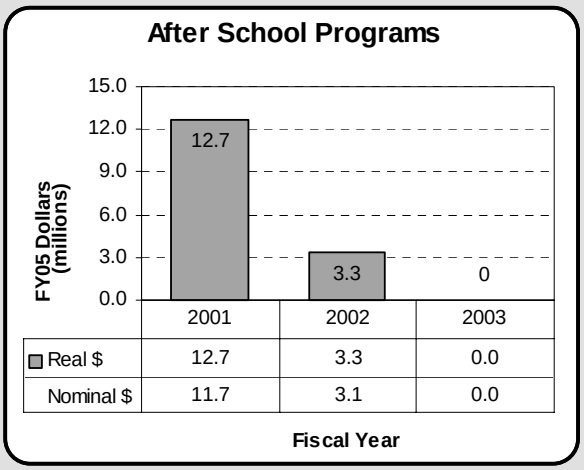
Adult Basic Education - The Department of Education funds Adult Basic Education programs, which provide a variety of services, including classes for high school equivalency (GED), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). These classes – of which more than half (53 percent) of the students are women – are designed to develop the literacy skills needed to qualify for further education, job training, and better employment.[13] State funding for ABE fell from $30.2 million in fiscal year 2001 to $27.8 million in fiscal year 2004, an eight percent reduction (a 13 percent decline in real terms). Funding for these programs has not kept up with demand. In fiscal year 2004, 23,400 individuals were on the waitlist for ABE programs, while only a fraction – roughly 10,300 individuals, 5,500 of whom were women – accessed services offered by these programs.[14] ABE is vital to supporting economic self-sufficiency for women, as there are substantial differences between those who drop out and those who get a high school equivalency, not only in their ability to find a job but also in the wages they earn.



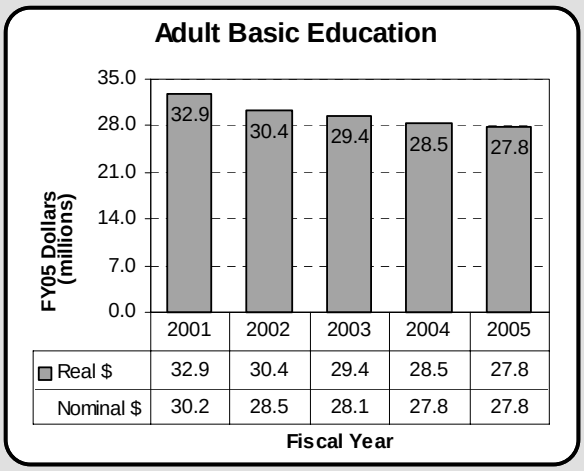
Early Literacy:
Cut 81 percent
between FY 2001 and FY 2005



Class Size Reduction:
Eliminated in FY 2003



After School Programs:
Eliminated in FY 2002



Adult Basic Education:
Cut 15 percent
between FY 2001 and FY 2005

Higher Education

While quality K-12 education provides a solid foundation on which to build later in life, post-secondary education provides opportunities for individuals to develop skills and, in turn, improve their earnings upon joining the workforce. Increasingly, a high school degree is no longer enough to compete in today's economy. While Massachusetts is known for its private institutions of higher learning, the majority of high school graduates who stay in Massachusetts to further their education do so at a public college or university.[15] Furthermore, upon graduation, the majority of students who attend public colleges live in Massachusetts. Between 80 and 85 percent of graduates from Massachusetts' state and community colleges live and work in the Commonwealth, directly contributing to the state's economy.[16] Public colleges and universities can play a critical role in enhancing individuals' earnings, as they provide quality education at a cost more affordable to individuals with low and moderate incomes.

Impact on Women and Girls

In Massachusetts, women make up significantly more than half of the total enrollment in public colleges and universities. At state and community colleges, enrollment rates for women are even higher; in the 2002-03 academic year, women represented at least 60 percent of students enrolled at these institutions.[17] These institutions accordingly award a higher percent of degrees to female students. In 2002-03, 68 percent of degrees from state colleges and 64 percent of degrees from community colleges were conferred upon women.[18]

Figure 25

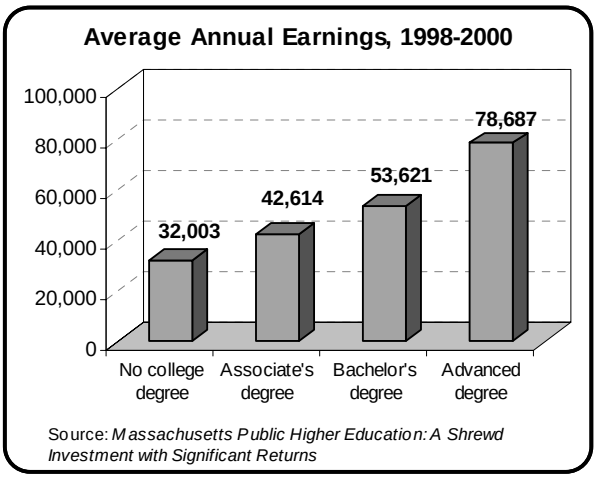
Percentage of Women Enrolled in and Awarded Degrees from Massachusetts' Public Colleges and University System

Enrollment	**2000-01**	**2001-02**	**2002-03**
UMass	51%	51%	51%
State Colleges	63%	63%	63%
Community Colleges	60%	61%	62%
Total	**58%**	**58%**	**59%**
Degrees Awarded	**2000-01**	**2001-02**	**2002-03**
UMass	55%	55%	55%
State Colleges	66%	67%	68%
Community Colleges	64%	64%	64%
Total	**61%**	**61%**	**62%**

Source: Office of Planning, Research, and Assessment, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education.

While completing high school is the first step toward securing economic self-sufficiency, additional credentials are increasingly required in today's economy, as shown above in Figure 21 above. Associate's degree programs should not be ignored in this context. Although data on median earnings by gender do not provide a category for associate's degree holders, data on total earnings show that acquiring an associate's degree substantially increases earnings. Individuals with an associate's degree earn $10,000 or 33 percent more per year than those with lower levels of educational attainment. Given the high proportion of women enrolled in community colleges, associate's degree programs are a viable option for increasing earnings.

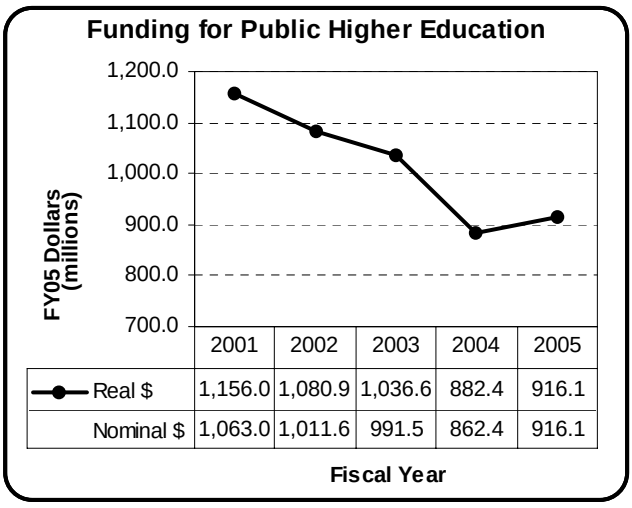
Figure 26



Funding

As in many other areas of the fiscal year 2005 budget, state appropriations for higher education provide a modest increase over the fiscal year 2004 funding level. Total state appropriations for higher education rose from $862.4 million in fiscal year 2004 to $916.1 million in fiscal year 2005. This amounts to a $33.7 million or four percent increase after adjusting for inflation. The additional funding, however, is a small step in reversing several years of budget cuts to higher education. Between fiscal years 2001 and 2004, total funding for higher education fell by $200.6 million or 24 percent in real terms. During this same period, appropriations for state colleges dropped by $30.4 million or 15 percent; support for community colleges declined by $35.9 million or 15 percent; and funding for UMass campuses fell by $132.1 million or 25 percent. (These reductions are all represented in real terms.)

Figure 27



Additionally, state funding for financial assistance programs have been substantially reduced:

- In fiscal year 2001, the state appropriated $100.1 million to the primary budget account that supports financial aid and scholarships. By fiscal year 2005, this amount totaled $82.4 million, 23 percent less than in fiscal year 2001, after adjusting for inflation.

- Funding for a scholarship called Tomorrow's Teachers was eliminated from the fiscal year 2004 budget. This program – which provided a full, four-year scholarship for any public college or university in the state in exchange for the student's commitment to teach at a Massachusetts public school – was last funded at $4.0 million.

Impact of Funding Cuts

To compensate for budget reductions, public colleges and universities have shifted some of their costs to students. For example, when Massachusetts' allocation to state colleges was cut in real terms by $30.5 million (15 percent) between fiscal years 2003 and 2004, average tuition and fees rose by approximately $780 or 20 percent after adjusting for inflation.[19] That increase followed a 27 percent real increase in the previous school year for these institutions.[20] At the same time, financial assistance designed to help students with tuition and fees, has also been cut. In particular, the Tomorrow's Teachers program described above would have likely benefited female students as prospective and current teachers are predominately women. Cuts to other financial aid programs have come at a time when individual federal financial aid awards are also declining.

Funding reductions to higher education jeopardize the Commonwealth's ability to provide quality educational opportunities at its own public colleges and universities. Higher education, in turn, is a means to secure economic self-sufficiency for women and men. Although higher education is not generally considered a "women's issue," the fact that women represent a significant majority of students in Massachusetts' public colleges and universities makes it one.

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[1] Earnings represent median earnings for individuals between 21 and 64 years of age. Data are from "Employment, Work Experience, and Earnings by Age and Education," 2000 Census, U.S Census Bureau.
[2] Recommendations from a recent lawsuit (*Hancock v. Driscoll*) indicate that there will be additional requirements for the Commonwealth to increase the level of funding for K-12 education.
[3] *Spring 2004 MCAS Tests: Summary of State Results*, Massachusetts Department of Education, September 2004, available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/2004/results/summary.pdf.
[4] "State Profile for Massachusetts," National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, available at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/profile.asp.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Percentages are from "Plans of High School Graduates: Class of 2003," Massachusetts Department of Education. May 26, 2004, available at www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/hsg/03/.
[7] Based on data from the Massachusetts Department of Education.
[8] *Public Education Finances: 2002*, 2002 Census of Governments, Vol. 4 Government Finances, U.S. Census Bureau, August 2004, p. 5.

[9] Reschovsky, A., "The Impact of State Government Fiscal Crises on Local Governments and Schools," Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin, Madison, December 2003.
[10] Based on data from local government employment for Massachusetts from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.
[11] "Making the Case: A Fact Sheet on Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time," National Institute on Out-of-School Time, Center on Research on Women, Wellesley College, January 2004.
[12] Although the Department of Education no longer provides funding for after school programs, the fiscal year budget 2005 budget provides $2.0 million for after school programs through the Targeted Cities Initiative – a program designed to reduce high rates of juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, and high school dropouts. This program was last funded at $455,000 million in fiscal year 2003. In fiscal year 2002, $10.0 million in funding for after school programs was also included in the budget appropriation for MCAS remediation, was eliminated in the following year, and has not been restored.
[13] Gender breakdown is from the Adult and Community Learning Services, Massachusetts Department of Education.
[14] Waitlist data are from the Adult and Community Learning Services, Massachusetts Department of Education. Of this total, 6,379 are on the waitlist for basic education programs; 17,313 were on the waitlist for ESOL classes.
[15] Coelen, S. et al., *Massachusetts Public Higher Education: A Shrewd Investment with Significant Returns, University of Massachusetts, Amherst and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education,* January 2002, p. 7-8.
[16] *Mindpower in the Massachusetts: The Commonwealth's Natural Resources*, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, 1997, p. 17.
[17] *Fall 2003 Admissions and Enrollment Tables*, Office of Planning, Research, and Assessment, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, January 2004, p. 33.
[18] *Degrees Awarded 2003*, Office of Planning, Research and Assessment, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, January 2004, p. 8.
[19] Data on tuition and fees are from "Tuition and Fees at Massachusetts Public Colleges and University," Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, available at www.mass.edu/p_p/includes/ir/Tuition&Fees88-04.pdf.
[20] Ibid.